

**State of New Mexico
Office of Attorney General
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NEWS RELEASE

Monday, May 17, 2010

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AG Urges Internet Company Reforms
Topix Needs to Improve Consumer Protections

(ALBUQUERQUE)---Attorney General Gary King, joined by 22 other state attorneys general, is urging Internet message board host Topix.com to improve consumer protections and eliminate its \$19.99 fee for "priority review" of abusive or inappropriate posts.

In a letter to Topix CEO Chris Tolles, the attorneys general expressed their "significant concerns" with the "Forums and Polls" pages and the Website's \$19.99 fee to expedite review of inappropriate posts. The fee, combined with the design of the feedback system and lack of adequate disclosure about the system, pose serious consumer protection concerns, according to the attorneys general.

As a group, the AGs say that targets of false, abusive or obscene posts are being victimized a second time by being charged a removal fee and find it deplorable that a Website would deliberately create an environment where these types of comments, many of them directed at children, are permitted and then allowed to remain on the Website.

An initial investigation by Kentucky and Connecticut found that the "Forums and Polls" section of Topix is routinely used to post abusive, vulgar and obscene information, often about children, in blatant violation of Topix's terms of service. The forums also appear to operate without moderators.

Kentucky Attorney General Jack Conway and Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal first contacted Topix in February and asked that the Website respond to their concerns and make changes. The attorneys general believe the changes offered by Topix did not fully address their concerns as well as the concerns of consumers across the country.

What the letter asks Topix to do:

- Eliminate the \$19.99 fee for “expedited review”
- Improve disclosures regarding the feedback system
- Improve screening of abusive posts

The attorneys general from the following states and jurisdictions have signed the Topix letter: Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Guam, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington.

LETTER INCLUDED AS ATTACHMENT

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